



Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species
Program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
Route 135
Westborough, MA 01581
(508) 792-7270 ext. 200

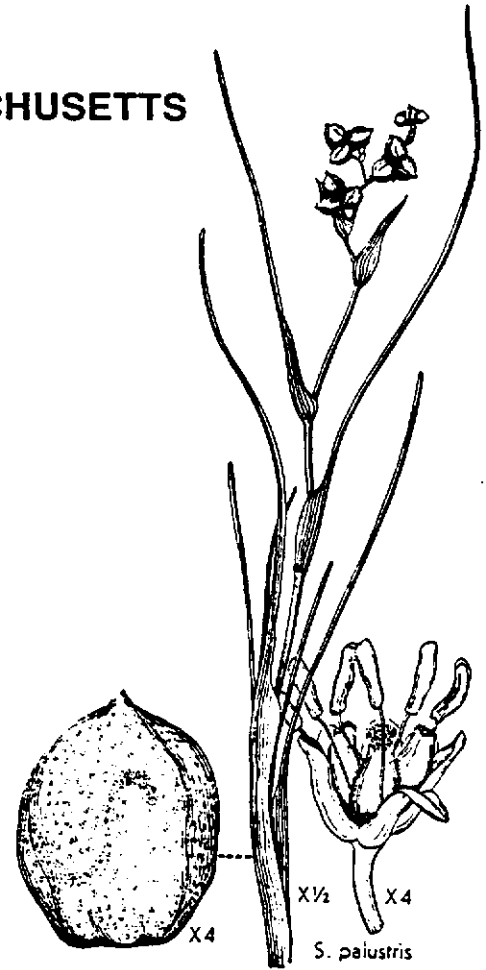
THREATENED PLANTS OF MASSACHUSETTS

Podgrass

(*Scheuchzeria palustris* L.)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Podgrass is a 2-4 dm (about 9-18 in.) tall, erect herbaceous perennial plant of sphagnum bogs. It has a few greenish flowers that grow together at the end of a zig-zag stem.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: The grass-like leaves are alternate and erect, 5-30 cm (2-12 in.) long, 1-3 mm wide, and form a round tube at the tip of the blade. The lowest leaves are clustered, large, and foliaceous with bases that partly sheath the zig-zag stem. Moving up the stem, the leaves get smaller until only a small sheath remains. The spike-like inflorescence (raceme) is 3-10 cm (1-4 in.) long and has a few flowers loosely clustered together. The sepals and petals are ovate-lanceolate and 2-3 mm long. The fruit consists of 3 diverging and inflated follicles, each containing 1-2 small black, narrowly ellipsoid seeds. Podgrass blooms from May until July.



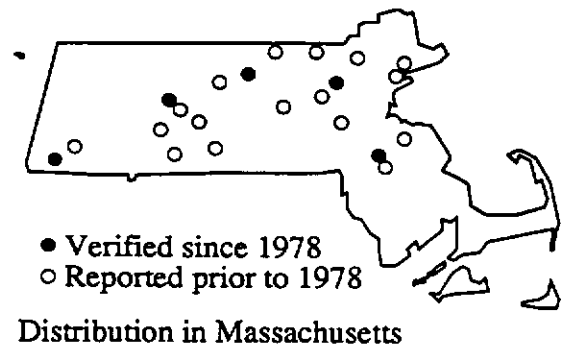
SIMILAR SPECIES: Saltmarsh arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritimum*) is also a perennial herb of wet places with linear leaves that sheath the stem at the base and spike-like inflorescences. Unlike podgrass, saltmarsh arrowgrass only has basal leaves; has numerous, bractless flowers; and a single-seeded fruit has only 1 seed. Also, saltmarsh arrowgrass typically grows in brackish, salt, or freshwater marshes and not in acidic bogs.

HABITAT & ASSOCIATED SPECIES: In Massachusetts, Podgrass occurs in acidic peat bogs, often in open graminoid areas. It is typically found with pitcher plants (*Sarracenia purpurea*), sundews (*Drosera intermedia*), three-way sedge (*Dulichium arundinaceum*), water willow (*Decadon verticillatus*), large cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*), tawny cottongrass (*Eriophorum virginicum*), and white beaksedge (*Rhyncospora alba*). Associated shrubs and trees may include mountain holly (*Nemopanthus mucronatus*), leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), and red maple (*Acer rubrum*).

Gleason, H.A. The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the US & Adjacent Canada. NY Botanical Garden, 1952.



Distribution Map of Podgrass



RANGE: The documented range of Podgrass extends across North America from Newfoundland west to Manitoba and Washington and south to New Jersey, Pennsylvania, northern Oregon, northern Illinois, northern Indiana, Nebraska, New Mexico and California.

POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS: Podgrass is presently listed as a Threatened species in Massachusetts. As with all species listed in Massachusetts, individuals of the species are protected from take (picking, collecting, killing...) and sale under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. Five current stations and seventeen historical stations (unverified since 1978) are known in the Commonwealth. Though the current sites range throughout the state, Podgrass is found in many fewer stations now than historically, indicating that it may be in decline in the state. Podgrass is listed as Threatened in Vermont and Endangered in Connecticut, New Jersey, and Indiana.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: As for many rare species, exact needs for management of Podgrass are not known. The following comments are based primarily on observations of populations in Massachusetts. Podgrass grows only in acidic bogs. It is small and sensitive to trampling, and any disturbance of the particular moisture regime or habitat would negatively impact the plants. The surrounding hydrology must be maintained and nutrient addition limited. Podgrass is typically found in open sphagnum areas and not in shrub dominated zones. In some instances, removal of woody species, such as leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), may favor the growth of Podgrass.

RA-1998